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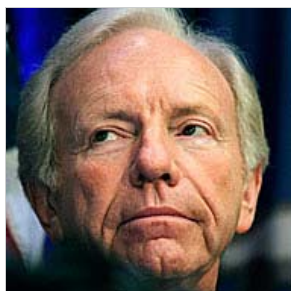


Photo: Getty Images

Should Suspected Terrorists Be Stripped of Their American Citizenship?

5/5/10 at 1:20 PM 68 Comments

As a sort of parallel to the hand-wringing of John McCain and Peter King yesterday over treating would-be car bomber Faisal Shahzad like the American citizen that he is,

Joe Lieberman is introducing a bill in Congress to strip American citizens of their citizenship if they're "found to be involved with a foreign terrorist organization." This would allow the government to declare the suspected terrorist an enemy combatant and avoid all those pesky rights afforded to American citizens accused of crimes. Chuck Schumer, for one, is already kind of onboard, saying, "That sounds like something I'd support, but I'd have to look at the legislation." After all, we all learned back in grade school how justice in America works, right? Innocent until allegedly guilty.

• Megan McArdle wants to know "why Joe Lieberman is willing to share the precious blessing of American citizenship with Charles Manson, Gary Ridgeway, and David Berkowitz, but wants citizenship stripped from a guy who strapped some firecrackers to a bag of non-explosive fertilizer?" [Megan McArdle/Atlantic]

• Steve Benen doesn't understand how this would work. "If an American citizen is accused of terrorist associations, he/she would lose citizenship status before a conviction? In Lieberman's vision, the defendant is punished and then gets due process? What if authorities make a mistake and accuse someone who's innocent? Would officials eventually give citizenship back with an 'Oops, Our Bad' card?" [Political Animal/Washington Monthly]

• Andrew Sullivan calls Lieberman and McCain "adolescent hysterics, whose terrorized Manichean view of the world sees nothing but an existential struggle and the imperative to win it." [Andrew Sullivan/Atlantic]

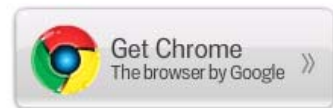
• Glenn Greenwald tweets, "It'd be pretty stupid to have something called a 'Bill of Rights' if the Gov't could just take your citizenship away and then deny them." [Glenn Greenwald/Twitter]

• Julian Sanchez finds it "depressing that a sitting senator would treat the rights of citizenship so lightly for the sake of a rapid, strutting display of toughness." [CATO @ Liberty]

• Michelle Malkin suggests that "perhaps DHS and the State Department should concentrate on the homeland security front door — making sure jihadis don't get citizenship and other immigration/entrance benefits in the first place — instead of waiting to deal with it on the back end after the fact." [Michelle Malkin]

• Matthew Yglesias thinks that while "there's a case for saying that convicted terrorists should be stripped of their citizenship, this would be part of the punishment that follows a conviction. You can't have a system where a cop comes up to me and says 'you're a

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terrorist, therefore you have no citizenship rights, therefore I'm putting you under arrest and you don't get any due process and now it's off to jail with you — no rights, no warning." [Think Progress]

• Sandy Levinson, a law professor at the University of Texas, writes, "No trial or conviction necessary in Sen. Lieberman's world. I'll take Glenn Beck (or, for that matter, the Antonin Scalia who forcefully dissented in Hamdi and said in effect that any policy like Lieberman's would require the Congress overtly to suspend habeas corpus) over the egregious junior senator from Connecticut." [Balkinization]

By: Dan Amira
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BY [MUJOKAN](#) on 05/05/2010 at 1:25pm Report

All this "enemy combatant" business has caused a lot more problems than it's solved.



BY [REBECCAROSE2004](#) on 05/05/2010 at 1:31pm Report

WAIT A MINUTE: There is a huge difference between applying this to people who are "suspected" of being terrorists and to those who actually are. Quite frankly, stripping away the citizenship of people who haven't been actually convicted of anything SCARES THE LIVING SHIT OUT OF ME. That is just frightening. Wow.

BY [TWINSFINDME](#) on 05/05/2010 at 1:31pm Report

When people don't have citizenship status in any country it causes headaches for everyone. Refugee camps are full of people without citizenship. What a terrible, stupid, ridiculous idea.

BY [LABECCA](#) on 05/05/2010 at 1:36pm Report

Give them due process, THEN take their citizenship away right before you hang them.

BY [JA2009](#) on 05/05/2010 at 1:38pm Report

This solution would create many more complicated problems. I understand wanting to remove citizenship with people who have pledged allegiance to terrorist organizations just as you would strip it from citizens joining foreign armies... the problem is that while with the latter there is typically a record, with the former, by default there is not one.

Which would mean that, as Rebeccarose points out, you'd be stripping citizenship without due process, and in many cases, without evidence.

BY [ECF](#) on 05/05/2010 at 1:38pm Report

Joe Lieberman is introducing a bill in Congress to strip American citizens of their citizenship if they're "FOUND TO BE INVOLVED" with a foreign terrorist organization

BY [FREELANCER](#) on 05/05/2010 at 1:38pm Report

I just...why can't Connecticut get rid of Joe Lieberman already? I don't have enough words to describe how intensely I dislike this man.



BY [REBECCAROSE2004](#) on 05/05/2010 at 1:38pm Report

Look. If you are CONVICTED of being a terrorist, maybe then the discussion is warranted. (some asshole f**k wants to come to this country to pretend to be a part of it, just so he can plot to destroy it? Yeah, maybe we need to revoke that) I don't know. But to say that all that has to happen is to be SUSPECTED of a

crime and you lose your CITIZENSHIP. Wow.

I mean, why stop there? Why not strip those pesky rights of child molesters and rapists? And Bernie Madoff...why don't we get rid of his stupid civil rights? What the hell?? Let's have a Civil Rights Fire Sale!!! ALL CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS MUST GO!!

BY **FRUITFLY** on 05/05/2010 at 1:39pm Report

Twins has an excellent point. Where are people without citizenship supposed to live? Or is that what happened to unicorns and fairies?

BY **URBANCHOCOLATE** on 05/05/2010 at 1:39pm Report

My guess is that Lieberman and Schoomer want to apply this and strip only naturalized citizens, not native born, hence Megan McArdle's comment on Manson, et.al.

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